

Families First

a newsletter for Nebraska Families

March/April 2021

N F A N P A

Diary Of A Former Foster Child

by Heather Knapik

Let's talk about childhood trauma for a sec.

As a child who grew up in the foster care system, I endured many traumas early in life. Abuse, neglect, losing my birth family, every move, every goodbye, all added to the long list of things no child should ever have to overcome. I'll share one memory in particular, because it's been a battle my whole life, and I've only just recently won the war.

Bread. Yup. Bread. For almost all of my adult life, I have not bought a single loaf of it. I couldn't bear to. It's a "trigger" for me.

When I was a child, I was hungry so often, I would sneak pieces of bread in the middle of the night. I chose bread because no one would notice a couple slices missing. (At four I was already thinking this way) No one ever did either. I would scurry back to my bed and lay there, sniffing it, holding out as long as I could bear, excited for my grumbling tummy. I would do my best to make the slice last as long as possible, taking tiny bites of the crust all the way around until only the good, soft part was left. Then I would take that part and fold it and roll it into a dense ball and take small bites like it was an apple. It always seemed to last longer that way. It probably didn't, but I ate it like that every time.

This continued after removal, after I was safe and there was always food around, throughout many foster homes. It eventually branched out to sneaking and hoarding other foods. Getting in trouble only made it worse. I didn't know why I was doing it, and I couldn't stop. Being forced to go on diets only made it worse. Food had become security for me,

taking it away created a whole new host of trust issues.

Bread was the beginning of years of a horrible, unhealthy relationship with food. At the time, I didn't know it. I didn't understand the WHY behind my actions even for years to come, because the trauma I had behind it hadn't been recognized, faced and dealt with.

When I got my first apartment, I was so excited to go grocery shopping and fill my new fridge and cupboards with yummy food that I got to choose for myself, the

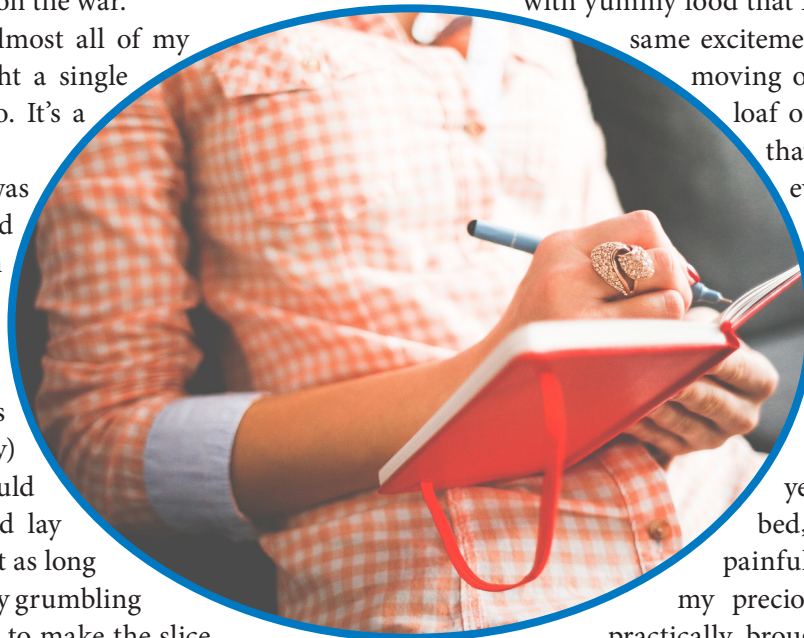
same excitement that any young adult feels moving out of their parent's house. A

loaf of bread was one of the items that made it into my cart. That evening, tired from the move and not wanting to really cook, I decided to make a sandwich. When I opened that loaf of bread, the smell of it hit me like a ton of bricks in the face.

All of a sudden, I was 4 years old again, laying in my bed, late in the night, with my painfully grumbling stomach, and my precious single slice of bread. It practically brought me to my knees on the spot. I couldn't even eat, and I went to bed with a grumbly belly and cried myself to sleep my first night in my new place. Trauma sneaks up when you least expect it.

I was 19 years old when that happened. I'm 39 now. Since that night, I haven't bought a single loaf of bread. I've since faced, understood, and worked through the hold that bread has had on me, but I still preferred to make all my sandwiches on hamburger buns because they smell different.

My husband and I have been foster parents for almost two years now. Almost a year ago, we got a call asking if we could take a ten year old and a three year old. We said yes. I knew it was time to start buying bread again. I mean, kids love peanut



Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

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Call NFAPA at 877-257-0176 or 402-476-2273.

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Attention Foster Parents!

Earn Your In-Service Hours While Getting the Chance to Win a Great Prize!

Answer these 10 questions correctly and you will not only earn .5 credits toward your in-service hours, but your name will also be put in a drawing for a prize. For this issue we are offering a \$10 Walmart gift card.

There are a variety of ways to do this. You can email the information to Corinne@nfapa.org, send the questionnaire to the NFAPA office at 3601 N. 25th Street, Suite D, Lincoln, NE 68521 or you can complete the questionnaire online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MarchApril2021> We will then enter your name in the drawing! We will also send you a certificate for training credit to turn in when it is time for relicensing. Good Luck!

1. Fill in the Blank. Tie your children's value to their character, not their _____.
2. True or False. Remember, trauma has changed EVERYTHING for your child!.
3. Fill in the Blanks. Putting up your defenses and safeguarding your family must be the response to legitimate concerns with actual facts, not the reaction to a feeling that's _____ or a _____ you have.
4. True or False. We are not prone as humans to buy into something someone said, something we read online, heard in a training, or a news report on a hot topic which, newflash (pun intended) thrive on sensationalism.
5. List 3 things to remember. If you are dealing with feeling intimidated when speaking to birth moms, please remember the following:
6. True or False. Never forget that "hurt people, hurt people," and that other people's actions are more about them than they are about you.
7. Fill in the Blank. No matter their age, letting kids know that you appreciate their behavior will make them feel _____.
8. Fill in the blank. Sometimes all it takes for a teen to change their behavior is a little _____.
9. In The Diary of a Foster Child what was her trigger.

10. Fill in the Blanks. Food had become security for me, taking it away created a whole new host of _____.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone #: _____

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(Continued from page 1)

butter and jelly right?!

Bread still has a hold over me. It's still a trigger for me. But now it triggers something different for me, something new. NOW when I smell that familiar smell, I think of the children from hard places with their own traumas, who have been entrusted to me to love and care for, even on the hardest days. The smell of that loaf of bread is a daily reminder to me that parenting kids of trauma is completely different. It reminds me to seek out the reason, the memory, the trauma behind the behavior...and to remain patient and gentle and calm as we work through the hard stuff.

Trauma doesn't just go away. There's no magic button, magic day, or magic age when it all just disappears and you're all better. There's no just "getting over it". Don't we wish it was that easy? If you've experienced childhood trauma, you know it's definitely not as easy as "getting over it". It consumes us. It seeps into every pore. It puts us into survival mode. Our thoughts, our feelings, and our actions toward ourselves, and toward others, are ALL effected by our trauma, for the rest of our lives. Trauma rewires the brain. That doesn't mean we can't heal from and cope with our trauma as adults, but at times, it can be a daily battle. There's no forgetting, there's only coping.

Many kids from hard places have gone through, seen things, and survived things that most adults can't even begin to fathom. Their worlds are spinning around them, everything about their lives has just changed, and good or bad...they've just lost the only family they've ever known. Of course they have GIANT emotions going on.

Yes, I now welcome bread into our household, and the reminder it brings to never give up on the kids who walk through my door.

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HOW TO PARENT A CHILD WHO CAN'T RECOGNIZE BOUNDARIES

by Mike Berry

A great majority of human life is made up of boundaries. As we grow from early childhood, into the teenage years, and eventually adulthood, we are continuously surrounded by boundaries. Boundaries to keep us safe, boundaries to preserve healthy relationships, boundaries to keep us within the law (to name a few). But what do you do when you are parenting a child who can't recognize boundaries?

It can be quite maddening.

You repeat yourself a trillion times.

You ask them to ask you before touching or "borrowing" your stuff. They don't.

You ask them to not take things out of their sibling's rooms, or ever go in without permission in the first place. They do anyways.

You bang your head against a wall (hopefully figuratively speaking), wondering why on earth they can't seem to understand the simple boundaries you have put in place?

We've been there. Quite often actually. Years ago I remember traveling in my car with a child, who we were caring for through foster care at the time, when he suddenly noticed a bracelet in the center cup holder of my car. He picked it up, asked who it belonged to, and proceeded to put it on his wrist. I replied nicely, "That's miss Kristin's bracelet. She must have left it in my car the other day when she went to the store." He smiled and continued to look at the bracelet, glistening in the summer sun beaming through the side window, as we glided down the highway. "Don't forget to put that back where you found it when we arrive home. I don't want her to lose it. Her sister gave that to her for Christmas." He nodded in agreement. A few days later, take a guess where we found that bracelet. I'll give you a hint....it wasn't in the cup holder

of my car. We later found it behind a dresser in his room....

It was a simple request: make sure you place the bracelet back where you found it. It doesn't belong to you. It is someone else's. Any human being could clearly understand this boundary.

Or could they?

That day I concluded that this behavior, the lack of regard for someone else personal property, was bad behavior... defiance at its finest. But there was way more going on than just defiance. If not defiance, what was it? What caused a child to take a bracelet that wasn't his, even after looking me in the eye and nodding "yes" when I reminded him to put it back where he found it?

The answer to this we must begin with a few crucial reminders...

First: Remember, trauma has changed EVERYTHING for your child! This is a reminder that we parents constantly need to give ourselves. I do. You do too. It's easy, in the fast-moving pace of life, and exhaustion, to drift into a place of frustration and mundaneness (let's just be honest....the churning, all-consuming grind of life and parenting) that we forget about the origin of our children's behavior. Their trauma history has dictated and directed much of their present behavior. Because of this, they are in a constant jockey between their prefrontal cortex (where logic, reasoning, and self-control live) and their brain stem (where survival-living takes place). The recognition of boundaries requires executive functioning, which can be in short supply with children who have experienced chronic trauma. Your child's brain has been altered by trauma. This doesn't solve the issue, but it does explain the reason for certain behaviors.

Second: Understand that they can't. I've been doing something subtle throughout this post to this point. I've been using the word 'can't.' Did you notice? I have not used the words "won't" or "refuse." I intentionally used the word can't. I mentioned in the previous point that the recognition and comprehension of boundaries requires executive functioning. One of the primary characteristics of executive functioning is working memory. Trauma disrupts this ability. Your child may just simply forget what you told them. "Ah, but it's not about what I told them, it's about respecting someone else's property!" you say. True. The inability to remember or not remember may not be the issue. It may just be a good ole case of "I want it, I got it!" (to quote Ariana Grande), although I doubt it. Here's something I find interesting though. When your child and mine take something that doesn't belong to them, we often find it cast aside, behind a dresser drawer, or deep in their pocket in the laundry, long forgotten, right? (Maybe not always, but sometimes) Why is that?

This brings into view another key characteristic of executive functioning which is inhibitory control. This characteristic also includes self-control. Children who have experienced chronic trauma lack inhibitory control, or inhibition, which is the trait that keeps us from doing things impulsively. Take off my shirt and run through the streets in the dead of winter (or ever)? No thanks. Pick up something that doesn't belong to me and carry it around like it's mine? Nope! Everything logical and in control about my make up tells me NOT to do any of this. But a person who's pre-frontal cortex has been damaged by trauma, thus drastically impacting the executive functioning trait of inhibitory control (ie- the "keep your little hands off" reminder alarm) may not be able to stop themselves from taking a bracelet that they were clearly asked NOT to take, and make sure they place back where they found it? You get the point. The trauma they sustained has disrupted this ability or inhibition drastically. Therefore, you as a caregiver have a crucial role here. You must function as their external brain often. Expecting a child who's executive functioning, logic, and reasoning that's been hard hit by trauma, to start behaving logically, remembering what you said, or stop themselves from taking something that isn't theirs, is like expecting a child who's bound to a wheelchair to "just stand up and start walking!"

What does this look like?

Given the fact that these behaviors are trauma-related and they may not be able to legit stop themselves, how do we parent a child who can't recognize boundaries? You may be thinking, "This kinda feels like we're excusing the behavior!" We're not. Remember...we're working on a bigger picture. Here are some ways to parent a child who just can't seem to recognize or adhere to boundaries...

1. **Respond calmly and firmly.** Very VERY hard to do...I know! Trust me. This is actually a tension you and I will have to continually manage with ourselves. It's

not a problem we can solve. After all, we're human and one of our emotions is pissedoffness! Especially when we feel violated or disrespected. And that's exactly how you and I feel when our stuff goes missing, or a clear guideline we set up get's bypassed. I don't like it when people touch my stuff...EVER! I hate it when I pass down a boundary with my child and they do the freaking opposite [insert angry cussing emoji here]. In this instance, it's important to remember that the lack of regard for a boundary is not necessarily defiance. It may be, but I believe it's a disruption in executive functioning, particularly what I just shared above... inhibitory control. Given this fact, our response is crucial. "Honey, remember I asked you not to take the bracelet and make sure you put it back? You need to make this right and take care of this right now." Calm and firm. My tone is regulated and conversational, no volume is heightened, I'm not demanding, I'm not threatening or handing down a consequence (yet), I'm simply stating what the child did, and asking he or she to make it right. You will see a world of difference when you respond to your child like this.

2. **Repeat, repeat, repeat.** My good friend, Dr. Ira Chasnoff, in explaining to parents a crucial step in helping a child with an FASD who's pre-frontal cortex (and executive functioning abilities) has been damaged by drug and alcohol exposure, says it like this- "Repeat, repeat, repeat!" As a caregiver, you will find yourself repeating yourself A LOT. To this point, you may have been frustrated over this, or wondered when in the world you will get to stop repeating yourself five bazillion times. The answer may be...never. It can take up to 5 prompts to get a child impacted by trauma to follow through on a task. Equally, you may have to continue to repeat the boundary. "Remember to put your seatbelt on." "Remember, you need to wait until your friend calls or texts you back before you send another text, or call them." "Remember, other's rooms are off limits unless you receive permission from us to go in there." "Remember, you need to put the bracelet back where you found it." "Remember, just because it's laying out on the table, and it doesn't have a name on it, doesn't mean it's free for the taking." Over and over and over and over again. Couple this with the next point (they go hand-in-hand)...
3. **Walk with, not over.** Even though you are ripe with frustration, you may need to walk with your child as he or she puts something they took without permission back, or makes a crossed boundary right. Because of the disruption in executive functioning, they may simply not be able to do it on their own, As much as we want them to suddenly recognize the social miscue, or violation of someone's personal property, or disrespect,

they may not have the ability. As I mentioned above, our role as a caregiver is to function as our child's external brain, guiding them and doing much of the thinking and processing for them, and with them. Our tendency is to hand down orders (understandable... we're busy busy people) and expect they get done. That has the feel of walking over a child. We need to walk with them. This not only repairs boundaries, but you have the opportunity to build trust and connection with your child in the process. Win-win!

Carry on, dear parent! I am right there with you. I'm in your corner because I understand what you go through on a daily basis. Hang in there.

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<https://honestlyadoption.com/how-to-parent-a-child-who-cant-recognize-boundaries/>

Speak To A Birth Mom Guide

by Jamie Giesbrecht



Many situations in life can be intimidating, and from what I have heard in my adoption groups, speaking to a birth mom is one of those intimidating things. For those of us who have fostered, we may have been eased into speaking to birth moms a bit more naturally. In the foster care system, we likely have spoken to birth moms, dads, and even extended family many times as supervised visits, in plan-of-care meetings, or team meetings for all adults involved in the child's life. This is actually how I was introduced to speaking to birth mothers, and I am thankful for that prior experience. This skill would be crucial on our family's journey into adoption, and ultimately, in choosing open adoption.

Why do we feel intimidation? In his book *Breaking Intimidation* by John Beveré, he says that the fear of confrontation causes intimidation. This makes sense to me. In my own life, I can feel intimidated by people with big personalities, those people who tend to take up all the space in a room. Why? Probably because I feel that any move or

sound I make might have them turn upon me, asking for an explanation. Human beings, or at least the healthy ones, do not enjoy conflict.

With birth parents, we are often wanting to be seen at our best. We are raising the child or children of another woman, and that is a weighty task. From personal experience, I have gotten all tied up in knots at birth parent visits over everything, from what clothes I put the child in to worries over what they would think of my messy vehicle. Afterward, I usually feel silly, but in the moment, we tend to see our own weaknesses and shortcomings, silently praying that we don't come up short from the birth parent's perspective. If you are dealing with feeling intimidated when speaking to birth moms, please remember the following:

- **Birth moms are human, just like you.** They are probably equally nervous; probably questioning their own choice of clothing, garlic breath, thinking about if their hair is smoothed down; you name it. If you are thinking it, someone else is capable of thinking it too. Most social situations where you have the capacity to feel nervous are completely normal. Your body is responding to stress. Realize that this is okay. Give yourself grace and extend the same grace to the birth mom who is probably quite nervous as well.
- **We all stumble on our words.** Sometimes we say the wrong thing. Sometimes we pick a joke that was really, really bad. Sometimes we are tongue-tied. You know what? You're a human, and the birth mom will see this. Be honest! If you can say out loud that you are nervous, I bet it will take the edge off for both of you. Most healthy adults can empathize with someone else who is struggling. If you saw someone who looked visibly nervous and was having trouble speaking due to their nerves, you would most likely feel compassion and give them time and space to finish their thoughts. It's likely you would encourage them with a kind word or assure them you want them to finish their sentence. Of course, there are special situations when adults are not healthy enough to have empathy like this, and that is not your responsibility to fix or diagnose. The point is, if you feel nervous, say so. Break the ice and induce some compassion. Your honesty will make you real and relatable.
- **She loves the same child you do.** Read that again. Sometimes, this is all it takes to gain the courage to speak to a birth mom. You both love the same child. In fact, she knew about the child before you did and has probably loved the child longer. There can be many reasons for speaking to a birth mom: getting medical history details, giving an update on the child, starting or continuing openness, etc. All of these reasons root back to one thing: mutual love and care for your shared child. She will always have a special place in your child's story (yes, I know that

some stories are really hard and really bad things might have happened. Regardless, she will always be your child's birth mom), and you will always have a special place in your child's life. Never forget, when speaking to a birth mom, that you are mutually invested in this relationship.

People often ask us, what is the best way to talk to birth parents or even extended family? The good news is there is no one right way to do this. I know that I feel better preparing ahead of time for huge things in my life, and these conversations can feel huge. Here are some ways that you can prepare to speak with a birth mom and some other things you can do to make the process smooth:

1. **Plan ahead.** Think about where you will meet to talk.

I personally think a close, intimate setting might be too intense for a first meeting. I would choose a public area for the first time. Maybe a busy restaurant, coffee shop, or a park that experiences quite a bit of use rather than a really small diner or tranquil, remote park. This not only will help put you both at ease, but it will also give you something to talk about. You may be learning about someone entirely new to you. It's not lame to talk about the weather or the menu. It is learning how to talk to someone you don't know. In a public area, a conversation about what is going on around you is at least something if the conversation stalls completely. In some cases, speaking to birth moms might be a challenge. If this is your first time meeting a birth mom, think about what advice you would give someone else meeting a stranger.

2. **If you plan to speak to a birth mom over the phone, plan some topics you can speak about.** Dead air time on the phone can make you feel awkward, so you might jot down talking points regarding your child or children. I suggest you make a list of questions to ask the birth mom. People feel valued when they are asked questions and provided time to talk about themselves. Respond thoughtfully and perhaps inquisitively with further questions, if you have any. I would also suggest being slow to share about yourself until asked. If they ask, then share, but otherwise, be ready to listen to them rather than rattle on about yourself.

3. **Check your privilege.** This phrase has appeared quite a bit in recent history, but it is important. There were big reasons that this birth parent was unable to raise her child. Whether it was age and experience, poverty, addictions, or abuse, this parent underwent the severing of the primary attachment between mother and child. Some birth moms had no intention of placing a child for adoption but rather had the courts make that decision for them. Some situations in which privilege can hinder adoptive/birth parent relationships are when the birth parents are quite impoverished, and the adoptive family is oblivious or

ignorant in their comments and actions. In a real-life example, I know of one birth parent who was able to get gifts from a local outreach for her child but lacked the funds to send them to her child in the mail. Some people cannot imagine not having \$15 to send a small package in the mail. Believe me, this is a real thing. Some birth parents are homeless, may live in a shelter, or be working multiple jobs and still find themselves unable to make ends meet. Socioeconomic differences or inequalities can make birth parents feel unworthy or embarrassed. I would definitely not plan to discuss at length your expensive tropical trip or give your extensive Christmas present list. Turn the tables for a moment and wear someone else's shoes. If you had struggled to pull together a few gifts from the thrift store, and the birth parent was the one who was listing off brand new electronics and expensive clothes that were given to your child as a gift, it might be hard to feel good about what you had given. Of course, there are exceptions to every situation, and one time, I had over \$300 in gifts given to one of our kids from an extended family member (which was far out of our budget for a birthday). In general, though, respect that you are coming from different places. Another example might be in past trauma. The birth parent, if coming from a background of addictions, may have had intense family problems or may continue to live in abusive situations. While it is fine to enjoy a rich and loving relationship with your own spouse, it probably isn't the time to go on and on about it.

4. **Don't dig around.** People that are different from us often fascinate us. And that is okay. But don't go poking around for information that is not freely given. The birth mom might still, even if it has been many years or even decades, struggle with talking about her decision to place her child for adoption, for example. The worst thing you could do is ask insensitive, intrusive questions. Be discrete and know when to stop. I once asked a birth father a question about his family of origin, and he started to cry. We had been conversing for a while and had gotten comfortable, so I was extremely dismayed that I had asked this question altogether too soon. And it is possible I shouldn't have asked it at all. Either way, I had to immediately stop and apologize. If you can see visible signs of discomfort (or hear signs of upset in the voice, if you are on the phone), STOP. Look for body language: looking away, fidgeting, coughing, or covering the mouth to mask tears all mean that it is time to take a step back. Be respectful of the journey this birth mother has taken, and know that the adoption, while it has caused you much joy, has probably caused her much sorrow. If the birth parent

offers to continue talking about a painful subject, that is okay. Otherwise, hands off; this is not your territory.

5. **Respect differences.** One of our fears as adoptive parents often is that the birth parents will be unhappy with how we have parented or with the choices that we have made for the child. This is reality, and it does happen! I have learned to have space for these opinions, even when it feels like criticism. It can be hard to take criticism, but remember, this parent may have had many dreams die when she placed their child for adoption. She may have dreamed of her child playing soccer, and it wasn't something your family was into. It is true that a birth parent cannot project onto you and your family what her or his wishes are, but we can still hold space for a birth parent that is grieving the loss of what could have been. My advice is to shake it off, let it go, roll with it, and refuse to feel offended. Being offended is a choice, not a right. Choosing to be offended is rarely helpful.

Sometimes, despite our best intentions, preparations, and planning, things go wrong. A birth mom may not seem to like us or may seem to really dislike us. Never forget that "hurt people, hurt people," and that other people's actions are more about them than they are about you. Try to think of things as experiences that help us learn rather than "good things" or "bad things." This will help you to learn for the next time. Birth moms come in all varieties just like adoptive families. Some people are harder to get along with. I've heard that some adoptive parents aren't perfect in this arena, either. Keep a sense of humor and don't take yourself too seriously. Birth moms are, in my experience, both fantastic and fascinating. I love to hear their stories and their journeys, and I feel privileged to call many birth moms my friend. Birth moms have made the biggest sacrifice I can imagine. I think we owe it to them to learn to speak with respect and love.

Jamie Giesbrecht is a stay at home mama to three adopted and two biological children. When she isn't homeschooling the kids, she can be found seeking adventure with her family in the Yukon and Northwest Territories, hunting, fishing, camping, or trail-riding the horses to town for some snacks. Her hobbies include cross-stitching, sewing jingle dresses for powwow, reading, and horseback riding as often as she can. Jamie married her high school sweetheart and best friend, Tyler, and together they enjoy watching the kids hatch ducklings and chicks, shear sheep, race around the yard on their horses, and raise pigs on their small farm in rural Northeastern British Columbia, Canada. Jamie is passionate about adoption and has been a foster parent on and off and in between adoptions since 2011.

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<https://adoption.org/speak-to-a-birth-mom-guide>

FOSTER CHAT

Many of you are foster/adoptive parents and understand the commitment, love and patience that is needed to help a child placed in your home. Because of your experience, you are the best recruiters for others interested in fostering! If you know someone interested in becoming a foster parent, have them reach at by calling the 1-800-7PARENT line (1-800-772-7368) or join one of our online foster chat sessions to answer questions and support them on their foster care journey. Chat sessions are listed on our website calendar at www.nfapa.org.

Survey Monkey Winners

Congratulations to the winners of the 2020 survey monkey quizzes. We appreciate you reading and taking the time to look at our newsletter.

Jan/Feb - Beth Kilday - Palmer, NE

Mar/Apr - Trista Borg - North Platte, NE

May/Jun - Curt Patton - Elkhorn, NE

Jul/Aug - Linda McMahan - McCook, NE

Sep/Oct - Reba Theas - Lincoln, NE

Nov/Dec - Amanda Hinds - York, NE

NFAPA SUPPORT GROUPS

As Nebraska is opening up with changes due to COVID please contact the RFC in your area to see when support groups will be back up and running or continuing with an online support. Registration is required when meeting in person.

CONTACT A RESOURCE FAMILY CONSULTANT FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Jolie Camden (Panhandle Area): 308-672-3658

- Virtual Support Group at this time for April, May, June and July. Available for all foster/adoptive parents on the second Tuesday at 6:30 pm (MT). Contact Jolie for Google Meet information

Tammy Welker: 402-989-2197

- Virtual Support Group at this time, available for all foster/adoptive parents on the second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm (CT). Contact Tammy for Zoom information.

Terry Robinson (Central): 402-460-7296

- One on one support or if you would like one started in your area, please contact.

Robbi Blume: 402-853-1091

- FACES-our online support group. Meets Tuesday night at 9:00 pm (CT)

NFAPA Office: 877-257-0176

- Parenting Across Color Lines in Lincoln. Usually meets the 4th Monday of the month, currently by Zoom. Contact Felicia for Zoom information or Community Events at the NFAPA Office.

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▶ Promoting Placement Stability

April 24, 2021
9:00 am-11:00 am (CT)

Seventy percent of placement disruptions occur in the first six months, primarily due to caregiver/parenting issues. Foster parents learn behaviors that promote stability and techniques to improve their responses to a child’s problematic behaviors.

- Identify how to reduce placement disruptions and increase placement stability
- Identify the three sources of instability
- Understand the impact of multiple moves on children
- Identify specific reactions to trauma that impact behavior

Training presented by Cindy Downey from the Centene Corporation

▶ Stewards of Trauma

June 12, 2021
9:00 am-11:00 am (CT)

Lost your fizz? If you are a foster parent, chances are you’ve experienced at least one symptom of Secondary Traumatic Stress. This training gives you the opportunity to reflect on your journey, examine stress points and build resilience. Take a break from the daily grind and join us!

Training presented by Christy Prang from the Child Advocacy Center

You must register to attend! We will send you the zoom link to log in.
Registration closes the day before the training.

Questions? Contact the Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association
at 402-476-2273 or Corinne@nfapa.org

Facilitated by the Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association
Sponsored by the Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services





12-hour in-service credit!

"Making the Commitment to Adoption"

Sponsored by Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
Facilitated by Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

**Spaulding/In-service Training
Offered Virtually!**

Saturday, April 17, 2021 - 9:00am-4:00pm
 Sunday, April 18, 2021 - 9:00am-4:00pm

The Spaulding program is offered to prospective adoptive families. Spaulding training offers families the tools and information that they need to:

- Explain how adoptive families are different
- Importance of separation, loss, and grief in adoption
- Understand attachment and its importance in adoption
- Anticipate challenges and be able to identify strategies for managing challenges as an adoptive family
- Explore the lifelong commitment to a child that adoption brings

Saturday, April 17, 2021 - 9:00am-4:00pm (with a break for lunch on your own)

- 1) **Exploring Expectations**—Defining adoption, the process, and the key players. Participant’s hopes and fears about the adoption process are recognized and empowerment strategies are identified to assist them in the process. Participant’s explore their fantasies about children they might adopt to become aware of the possible influence on their decision about adoption.
- 2) **Meeting the Needs of Waiting Children**—Assist prospective adoptive parents in focusing on the needs of children awaiting adoption. Explore the issues of separation, loss, grief and attachment. Plus the unique issues related to parenting a child who has been sexually abused.

Sunday, April 18, 2021 - 9:00am-4:00pm (with a break for lunch on your own)

- 3) **Exploring Adoption Issues**—Identify supports within their family and introduce them to common issues that all adoptive families face. Help develop strategies for dealing with these issues; explore crisis periods in adoption; explore their own strengths, needs and challenges as they consider adoption
- 4) **Making the Commitment**—Assist prospective adoptive parents in considering resources they may need, what they need to know, what they need to do, and what they need to explore about themselves as they consider adopting a particular child or children.

Register online at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SpauldingRegistration2021>

You will be notified if Spaulding is cancelled due to low registration.
Please note times/dates of the training (Central Time).
Questions, please call 402-476-2273 or Toll-Free 877-257-0176



What are you doing this summer?

How about hanging out with your siblings for a weekend of fun and connection at Camp Catch-Up?

Early bird registrants who fully complete and submit their applications before March 15 get a free Camp Catch-Up hoodie.

Here's the scoop. Together, you can enjoy everything camp has to offer: canoeing, ropes courses, water activities, hiking, and more - and it's completely free!

You can choose from three weekends, depending on what's closer. Transportation provided at designated locations across Nebraska.

Eastern NE Camp: June 10-13 at Camp Moses Merrill, Linwod, NE

Western NE Camp: July 8-11 at the Nebraska State 4-H Camp, Halsey, NE

Fall Camp: September 24-26 at Camp Solaris, Firth, NE

New to camp? Go online to apply at campcatchup.org.

Attend camp last year? Log into your campdoc.com account to update your information.

2021 Day Camp Events to be announced.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

1. For youth ages 8-19.
Younger siblings accepted on a case by case basis.
2. Have at least one sibling not residing with the camper also attend camp.
3. Have the ability to understand the purpose of camp.

FROM THE HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES-FOSTER CARE RD CORNER:

DHHS is excited to share that we are working on a Process Improvement Initiative to improve how foster parents enter and move thru the Foster Care Licensing process. This initiative will assess the licensing experience for all foster parents-including relatives, kinship and agency supported homes. We hope to streamline the process and decrease obstacles that deter homes from becoming licensed. As we work on this project we will partner with NFAPA and individual foster parents across the state to learn from your experiences to improve our process. We are looking to ramp up our online and mobile availability to increase information sharing and allow easier access for foster parents and foster care agencies. We want the process of becoming a foster parent to be as simplified as possible so we can focus on increasing skills and providing support to foster parents while they care for the children of Nebraska.

DHHS will be licensing all of our Relative and Kinship Foster Parents in Nebraska, this will provide all of our homes training and support to meet the specific needs of the children placed in their care. We understand the time and effort it takes to complete the licensing process and we want to streamline the process, answer your questions and support you in the care you give. Please reach out to your Foster Care Agency or DHHS Foster Care RD Staff with questions or assistance as you work through the licensing process or if you have ideas on how to improve the process. Your input is vital to our Process Improvement Initiative!

For more information about becoming a foster parent and/or other resources, please contact the Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association at: 1-800-7PARENT (1-800-772-7368).

HOW TO HELP KIDS DEAL WITH REJECTION

by *Katherine Prudente*

Don't minimize feelings. Do encourage resiliency

Rejection and disappointment are two difficult feelings to have. We often blame ourselves when we don't reach some of our goals. Resiliency (or "grit" as it's now called in pop psychology) is a valuable character trait that we can foster in our children. It is inevitable that our kids will feel disappointed, rejected, and defeated at times. Here are 5 tips that can help build some grit:

1. Comfort and validate their experience. When our kids feel validated and understood, it helps them build a sense of self. It also normalizes their feelings and builds up what I like to call "psychic muscle." Like working out, when we can lift heavier weights we get stronger and it becomes easier. The better we are able to feel and tolerate uncomfortable feelings, the stronger and easier it is to handle the next time around.

For example, if your child is disappointed because she did not get into her dream college you could say, "That's so disappointing, I know you were really hoping to get in." Many well-intentioned parents attempt to minimize feelings of disappointment for their kids, but miss the big picture. Your child is disappointed and may need some comfort before she can consider the other alternatives.

2. Make failing safe. Often adolescents (and adults!) are often afraid of failure. Failure is an excellent learning experience, albeit an uncomfortable one. It can help us reassess our goals and come up with a new game plan to try again. A recent article in Forbes, the author discusses five personality traits of entrepreneurs and one trait is resiliency despite failure.

3. If you don't succeed, try again. This is not a new euphemism but often after failure a lack of motivation kicks in. If we can make failing part of the process, then a second chance (or third, or fourth!) is always there.

4. Tie your children's value to their character, not their achievements. It's easy for parents to want their kids to go to the best schools, get straight A's and be superstars. The whole world should see what we see and love in our kids. Yet, this pressure to succeed can send a message that your self-worth is directly correlated to your achievement.

Recently, I had a group of sixth graders share their worries about getting into Ivy League schools! When your child achieves a goal like getting exceptional grades, focus on his work ethic and determination, not the end result. "That's great! You worked real hard this semester."

5. Take a back seat. We all want to protect our kids from trials and tribulations. But if we shelter them for too long, it stunts their ability to develop a sense of self-efficacy. When we try to solve problems for them or intervene on their behalf, it sends a message that we don't think they can do things on

their own...and they start believing that. Try problem solving together, and let your child take the lead. It will give him confidence to handle situations in the future, and give you the peace of mind that he can, indeed, handle it.

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<https://childmind.org/article/how-to-help-kids-deal-with-rejection/?fbclid=IwAR0J6Ihan9AHXYJAt3eQnAx6OCcKIBrAXDIDx3ZMs-k9rF2LJHfzJl2BF2k>

WHY DISABILITY REPRESENTATION IN TOYS IS SO IMPORTANT

by *Lindsay Filcik*

Representation. Every single human being deserves to see somebody who looks like them in movies, books, commercials and toys. Unfortunately for far too long, that has not been the case. People of all races, abilities, body types, genders, religions, etc. need to be represented in what we watch, read and play with. Recently we are seeing small steps to remedy this problem in the media and I so appreciate that! Representation matters!

Imagine being a child with a disability and all you ever see are typical, able-bodied children. What message does that send you about yourself? That you are "abnormal." That you are not worthy of being shown to the world. I know you're reading this cringing inside, because of course no child should ever be made to feel that way.

Lack of representation also hurts those children who are represented. They grow up with the incredibly skewed perception that everybody looks like them, and anybody who doesn't isn't "normal" and should be feared. That, my friends, is how racism and ableism can be perpetuated in our kids without us even realizing it. Representation matters!

Now imagine that same child seeing commercials, advertisements, characters in movies and books, and dolls made to look like them. What an inclusive message that sends. You are a human, worthy of being included! You are human, just like everybody else! Representation matters!

Look at their faces. Pride at having a toy just like them. Imagine a typical child who had one of these dolls at home among their other dolls. Imagine how they might react to seeing a person with Down syndrome, or forearm crutches, or a wheelchair. All of the sudden, that person is just another person. Their differences have already been validated and explored by that child through play. That child will be much more likely to say "Hi" and ask a name rather than point and stare. Representation matters!

So what can you do? Let brands know when you appreciate their inclusivity. Let brands know when you believe they need to make a change. Buy toys like this for your able-bodied, typical children. Let them play with toys that represent all types of humans. Representation matters!

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https://themighty.com/2021/01/down-syndrome-disability-representation-toys/?utm_term=.Autofeed&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1610392136

THE POWER OF POSITIVE ATTENTION

by Katherine Martinelli

How to use it (instead of negative attention) to change behavior



When kids are misbehaving, it is natural for parents and educators to want to correct them, pointing out — sometimes not too calmly — what they are doing wrong. Though this may seem like common sense, it can actually backfire.

Experts have found that giving kids positive rather than negative attention is much more effective in changing behavior. Research shows that praise for behavior you want to encourage gets more results than calling out things you want them to stop doing.

So what do we mean by positive attention? And how is focusing on the positive, instead of the negative, different from “looking the other way” and letting kids off the hook when they misbehave?

What is positive attention?

It’s easy to respond harshly when kids are doing something they’re not supposed to and not react at all when they’re doing what we expect of them. Positive attention requires a lens shift in which we call out kids for good behavior and ignore (at least in the moment) the not-so-good.

The idea is that for children, parental attention is so powerful that whatever behavior we pay attention to will increase, even if we’re telling them to stop.

Essentially, rather than chiding them for what they’re doing wrong we want to catch kids doing right. It’s a simple shift, but one that goes against centuries of parenting norms and takes some practice before it becomes second nature.

How to implement positive attention

So what does this look like in practice? Positive attention can take many forms, including verbal praise, hugs, kisses, high fives or rewards. It may look different for a three-year-old than it does for a teen, but the basic idea is the same.

The key, explains Lindsay Gerber, PsyD, a clinical psychologist at the Child Mind Institute, is being as descriptive and specific as possible in your praise so that children know exactly what behavior they should replicate. Experts sometimes call this giving “labeled praise.”

Instead of saying “great job!” or “I love how you’re doing that,” try to spell out exactly what they are doing well. For example, you could say “I love how you are sharing your crayons with your sibling” or “it’s awesome that you finished

your homework before asking to use your tablet.” No matter their age, letting kids know that you appreciate their behavior will make them feel good, and when they know exactly what they are being praised for they will be more likely to do it again in the future.

But what about bad behavior?

This is the part that may be the most challenging. If a child is behaving in a way that is unsafe for themselves or others, then of course an adult should intervene. Otherwise, do your best to ignore the behavior then provide positive attention when they stop. Child behavior experts call this “active ignoring.” By withdrawing your attention, you are sending the message that acting out is not the way for them to get what they want. You reinforce this message when, as soon as you see them calming themselves down or obeying an instruction, you do give them your attention.

Just because you are ignoring a behavior in the moment doesn’t mean that you don’t ever address it or that you are pandering to your child; quite the opposite. “When you’re seeing a behavior that you want to decrease, that’s really not the time to interact with the kid,” says Dr. Gerber. “That’s a time to take a deep breath, notice it, maybe gently try to redirect them to something else or actively ignore it.”

Redirecting them can be anything from asking if they want a snack to pointing out something fun coming up on the family calendar. Later, when things have calmed down, you can circle back around to talk about it.

Positive attention in action

How does the framework of positive attention work in a challenging situation? Let’s take a scenario any parent will experience at some point: your child throwing a tantrum in the check out line at the grocery store because they want a candy bar. Giving in and letting them have the candy bar would likely stop the tantrum quickly, but it would also guarantee that the behavior would repeat itself. Negotiating (you can have a brownie when we get home) would likely have the same effect.

Many parents feel judging eyes on them in a public space and feel that they need to make a show out of being firm with their child by telling them to stop, raising their voice, or issuing ultimatums. Chances are this kind of response won’t make you or your child feel very good, and also won’t prevent the behavior from reoccurring, since you are inadvertently reinforcing the behavior by feeding it attention.

If you are practicing positive attention, however, you would ignore the tantrum until it’s over (which is of course easier said than done). As soon as the child is calming down, that’s the time to give positive attention and praise. “I’m really proud of you for calming down, for taking a few deep breaths, and for understanding that this is not something we could do right now.”

When you’re back home and things are less emotional, then you can address the tantrum. Dr. Gerber says to use a lot of validation when talking with your child in this scenario. For example, saying “I saw in the grocery store that it was really hard for you when I told you that you couldn’t have the candy. When I say no to something, that means that we can’t have it in that moment. So next time something like that happens, what do you think we can do? How do you think that we can better manage?”

In this way, Dr. Gerber says, “you’ve acknowledged and

reflected back their emotional experience and their wants and needs in that moment, and you're also reaffirming your expectations and your boundaries and priorities as a parent." She says that an interaction like this also helps teach kids to problem solve by modeling, and increases their agency and ownership over their behavior.

It's important to note that ignoring something like a tantrum won't make it stop immediately. In fact, Dr. Gerber tells parents to be mindful of the "extinction burst" — in other words, it's going to get worse before it gets better. So the intensity of the tantrum may increase before it stops completely, and it also may take a few times of ignoring tantrums or other behaviors before they cease.

What to do if the behavior doesn't stop

If you continue to see behaviors you are trying to extinguish, then Dr. Gerber says it may be time to team up with a mental health provider to create an individualized plan of action for you and your child. Something like a behavior chart can be very effective, especially if the reward is positive attention. If the end goal is too challenging for the child to start out, you can break it down into smaller, more manageable goals that can help pave the way to achieving the desired ultimate outcome.

Sometimes all it takes for a teen to change their behavior is a little appreciation. Teenagers are self-absorbed by nature, but that doesn't mean your teen doesn't care how you feel. If it's important to you to eat dinner as a family, sans phones, say so. "It really meant a lot to me when we all ate together the other night. It was so nice having no phones or distractions, it made me feel like we were able to really hear each other."

Creating a stronger bond

Transitioning to a model of positive attention takes patience and practice on the part of the parent. Sometimes you might backtrack and lose your cool, and that's okay. We're only human. If that happens, turn it into a teachable moment by apologizing, expressing your own frustrations, and talking about what you can do differently next time. Dr. Gerber says that the mental health provider you're working with can be support for you, too. "We're also providing support to parents, because whenever we're thinking of changing a child's behavior, a parent really plays a very big role," she says.

Another thing that can be helpful in the long run is carving out even just 10 minutes a day of check-in time. During this time, a parent can give their child undivided attention doing an activity they enjoy, whether it's playing a card game, doing a puzzle, building with LEGOs or making some art. "We want to build that into their schedule on a daily basis, and to make sure that we are giving them attention in a positive way," says Dr. Gerber. "Because if they're not getting that attention, they're going to seek it another way."

In the end, beyond addressing behavior, utilizing positive attention can create a stronger bond with your child. "And what we know about children's mental health in general," adds Dr. Gerber, "is that having a positive relationship with any adult — whether it's a parent, a grandparent, a caregiver, or someone in the community — is just an overall protective factor against other mental health disorders or symptoms."

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<https://childmind.org/article/the-power-of-positive-attention/>

HOW TO HELP KIDS LEARN TO FAIL

by Beth Arky

Only through trial and error can children become resilient adults

Parents tend to see their mission as helping their kids succeed. But there's a growing realization among teachers and other professionals who work with children that kids increasingly need help learning how to fail.

Not learning to tolerate failure leaves kids vulnerable to anxiety. It leads to meltdowns when the inevitable failure does occur, whether it happens in preschool or college. And perhaps even more important, it can make kids give up trying—or trying new things.

That's why Michael Jordan, one of the world's greatest athletes, has spent years preaching the importance of losing. Jordan has spoken extensively about how perseverance and resilience in the face of challenges on and off the court are what have made him a winner.

Unfortunately, as the world puts increased pressure on kids to be winners, and parents feel compelled to enable them in every way possible, we're seeing more and more kids who become distraught over even the smallest misstep.

Take Sara's son John, who started taking piano lessons at 6. "Every time he played a wrong note he would pick up the music booklet and hit himself on the head with it!" she says. "His piano teacher said she'd never seen a kid who was so hard on himself. I told him when he made a mistake to treat himself the way he'd treat his younger cousin, that no one can learn if someone's being mean to them, and that he wasn't allowed to be mean to himself."

When Alicia's daughter Sara was 14, she became so distraught over not getting into a selective high school, while friends did, she began to self-harm. "It was so terrible: the pressure, the disappointment," says Alicia.

Clearly, distress or frustration tolerance is an important life skill to master. When it comes to school, "the ability to tolerate imperfection—that something is not going exactly your way—is oftentimes more important to learn than whatever the content subject is," says Dr. Amanda Mintzer, a clinical psychologist at the Child Mind Institute. "Building that skill set is necessary for kids to be able to become more independent and succeed in future endeavors, whether it's personal goals, academic goals, or just learning how to effectively deal with other people."

So how do parents teach kids to fail? Dr. Mintzer offers a multistep process:

First, show empathy

Empathize with your child; see that she's in distress. "Don't just say, 'It's okay, you'll do better next time,'" Dr. Mintzer says. "It's invalidating to brush off a child's feelings of frustration and disappointment." Instead, parents need to change their language: "I see you're really disappointed, I know you really wanted to do better."

Make yourself a model

You can explain that failure is a part of life and happens to

everyone, even you. You could share examples of “failures” you’ve had. “Parents can model how to handle their own disappointment,” such as losing out on a promotion at work, Dr. Mintzer says. “Kids aren’t necessarily exposed to the reality that life includes mistakes, missteps, and even failures. As much as everyone likes things to go according to plan, it’s important to teach our children that it is also okay when they don’t.”

Make it a teachable moment

A child’s failure is a chance for parents to teach acceptance and problem-solving skills. You and your child can try to come up with what she could do the next time for a better chance at success. For instance, could she study differently or talk to the teacher about any problems she’s having before a test?

“It’s a balance of acceptance and change,” Dr. Mintzer says. “It’s about accepting that the situation is what it is and building frustration tolerance while also asking, ‘Can we change something in the future. Can we learn from this?’”

The minefield of social media

At the same time, kids need to know that sometimes when we fail or face disappointment, there’s not a lot we can do about it in that moment; we have to accept it as a part of life and move on. Dr. Mintzer notes as an example the minefield that is social media.

Say a girl’s friends tell her they can’t hang out with her and then she sees them together on Instagram or Facebook.

“That really hurts,” Dr. Mintzer says. “There are lots of emotions: frustration, disappointment, sadness, anger. How does she deal with that? Calling friends and screaming at them only makes things worse. She could ignore it and pretend she never saw, but that’s not going to make her feel better or change what happens in the future.”

So how can a parent help her accept what happened? The girl might be able to get more information to make herself feel better. Perhaps she can talk to these kids in a calm way, telling them that she saw the photos and her feelings were hurt. Maybe she’ll discover a reason behind it. But she may not get an answer she likes, or get one at all.

That leads to another life lesson: Sometimes we get left out, sometimes we aren’t liked, and we have to learn to cope with that truth without making the situation worse. Dr. Mintzer notes, “A lot of these skills are needed for interpersonal relationships.”

Step back and allow kids to fail

It can be very tough to watch your child fall down but she can only learn how to handle disappointment through trial and error. As books like *The Blessings of a Skinned Knee* and the newly released *Gift of Failure: How the Best Parents Learn to Let Go So Their Children Can Succeed* emphasize, parents must stop hovering. Otherwise, they rob children of the very experiences that require problem-solving and set them on the path to resilience and the confidence to take on new challenges.

Therapy can help

If a child can’t function because of a fear of failure, therapy may be called for. Even if a child doesn’t have an anxiety diagnosis, she may be frozen with anxiety. When that happens, Dr. Mintzer says, with what’s called exposure therapy, “we slowly expose them to things that aren’t perfect.”

For instance, parents will complain that homework takes forever because a child will repeatedly rip it up and start over.

“We’re teaching kids that it’s okay to misspell a word and keep going,” she says. “In a session we might have them write a paragraph or two and make as many mistakes as they can, including sloppy handwriting, to get them used to the idea that it ‘s not the end of the world.”

“We’re saying,” she adds, “‘We’re going to practice making mistakes. We know, it’s uncomfortable for you, and we also know that with practice, you can learn how tolerate it.’”

Parents have more ways to help their kids move beyond failure.

When Alicia discovered Sara’s self-harming, she tried to set her up for success by enrolling her in a small, private school. She also got Sara into therapy and tried to give her the time and support to “figure things out,” allowing her the chance to feel proud of herself when she did.

Alicia says Sara, now about to start her junior year, “just told me she’s so glad she went there instead of one of the selective enrollments. At the time, it seemed to her like a huge failure to be rejected by those schools. But she’s much happier now, no self-harming and displaying resiliency.”

Learning to fail can be painful. But kids will only succeed if they can acquire the skill to handle whatever life throws their way.

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<https://childmind.org/article/how-to-help-kids-learn-to-fail/>

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I FEEL AFRAID OF MY CHILD’S BIOLOGICAL FAMILY?

by Mike Berry



When we used to do in-person events (hello COVID!) the topic of biological family relationships often came up. And in many of those conversations with conference attendees, we’ve been asked, “What should I do if I feel afraid of a biological family member?”

I’ll begin by posing a series of questions:

Why do you feel afraid? Is there a reason? Did something specific happen? Did a bio parent show up at your door and

threaten your family? Or did they do something dangerous?

Or is your fear coming from...you?

I don't mean to come across harshly here, but I have to be honest about something important: Over the past 2 decades, fostering more than 20 children, adopting 8, and interacting with more biological parents and family members than I can recall, I have never had a legitimate reason to be afraid of them.

Quick story. Many years ago, Kristin and I were walking out of a courthouse after a permanency hearing for a child we were caring for through foster care, when the father of the child's bio mom stopped us, looked us in the eye, and said bluntly, "Don't allow [the baby's] father anywhere near you, your house, or your family. He's crazy. Don't tell him where you live. He will come and kick your front door in, and take the baby from you."

As I type these words, I can still remember the way I felt when he told us this. My body instantly filled with anxiety. There was a pounding sensation in my head, and my hands became cold and clammy. I had that out-of-control feeling the entire drive back to our house that afternoon. This continued for a month or so. Until I met the child's father. He was respectful. He was kind. He was human. He told me his story...his hopes...his dreams...his own fears. Had he made mistakes? Yep. But then again, so had I. Every fear I had built up in my mind, based on the words of the child's grandfather, were unfounded. I had nothing to fear but the fear I had bought into blindly.

On March 4, 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke these iconic words during his inauguration as the thirty-second president of the United States: "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." This quote has been recited during times of war. It has been repeated by politicians and government officials in times of world crisis or terror. We see it branded on signs during natural disasters and social unrest. These words have made their way into our homes and our hearts. But what was FDR really saying on that cold winter day in 1933? I believe he was warning us that if we give fear enough power, attention, or authority, it won't hesitate to start controlling everything we think and do. It'll even damage relationships (or would-be relationships)

We often allow ourselves to think the worst before we really know the facts. We instinctively allow fear to take up residence in us and fester. To break this unhelpful response, ask yourself a few key questions:

1. What are the cold, hard facts? Find out what the facts are surrounding a case. It's okay to read police reports or court documents. Take time to weed through opinions and sort out the facts. Meet with the bio parents if you can (more on that in a minute). Listen to their story. Get to know them as a fellow parent. Just like it did for me, it may give you a brand new perspective on a situation, and this person who gave your child life. This has been the case with nearly every bio family member I have met and have a relationship with.
2. Have we talked (and CAN we talk?) This question is two-fold. First, have you tried to connect human-to-human with a bio parent? Start there. Maybe you can, or maybe you can't. This depends on your specific situation. Second, if you can, have a conversation with them, learn about them AND from them. And believe the best, unless or until you have reason otherwise. You will almost always discover that your fears are unfounded.
3. Am I in danger? This is a very important question to ask. Not "Do I feel that I'm in danger?" but rather "Am I IN danger?" Feelings are important but not always

based on reality. "Am I in danger?" is based on facts.

I'm going to go out on a limb and say this: 99.9% of the time, the fear you feel is unfounded. We are so prone as humans to buy into something someone said, something we read online, heard in a training, or a news report on a hot topic which, newflash (pun intended) thrive on sensationalism. I think bio families, and bio parents have gotten a bad rap. I think far too often they've become the scapegoat for the apprehensions and insecurities we have as parents. We need to stop this. It's not healthy for our children, and not healthy for us. And by the way, our children who were adopted, will ALWAYS have 2 sets of parents. Get used to sharing.

Are there dangerous cases out there? Sure. Are there times when you need to have strong, immovable boundaries around your family? Absolutely. You may even be reading this and you are in a dangerous situation and it's legitimate. But these are rare. Putting up your defenses and safeguarding your family must be the response to legitimate concerns with actual facts, not the reaction to a feeling that's unfounded, or a persisting insecurity you have.

The most important thing to remember is this: Bio parents and family members are human beings just like you. They have made mistakes just like you and I have. Let's not treat fellow human beings poorly, with contempt, or differently because they've walked a different life path than us, or made different choices than we have. Let's celebrate the fact that we are fellow human beings who are living, breathing, and trying to figure out life to the best of our ability.

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<https://honestlyadoption.com/what-should-i-do-if-i-feel-afraid-of-my-childs-biological-family/>

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN A PART-TIME JOB?

NFAPA is looking for a foster/adoptive parent willing to be a Resource Family Consultant in the Southwest area of the state. Hours can vary but expectation is 10-20 hours a week. Please call Felicia at the NFAPA office to learn more! 402-476-2273

The NFAPA Board is looking to fill several volunteer board positions in the following areas: Eastern (Omaha), Central and Western service areas. Please contact Felicia at the NFAPA office at 402-476-2273 and send a bio of why you would like to be on the board to: Felicia@nfapa.org

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JOIN NFAPAyour support will enable NFAPA to continue supporting foster parents state-wide!

Benefits

- Ongoing trainings/conferences at local and state level
- Networking opportunities with other foster families, adoptive families, and relative caregivers
- Opportunity for all foster families, adoptive families and relative caregivers to be actively involved in an association by serving on committees and/or on the Executive Board
- Working to instigate changes by alertness to legislation affecting the child welfare system
- An advocate on your behalf at local, state and national levels
- 25% of membership dues goes toward an NFAPA Scholarship

Thank you for your support!

Please mail membership form to:
NFAPA, 3601 N. 25th Street, Suite D
Lincoln, NE 68521.

Questions? Please call us at 877-257-0176.

NFAPA is a 501c3 non-profit organization comprised of a volunteer Board of Directors and Mentors.

Name(s): _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ County: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

I am a Foster/Adoptive Parent. I have fostered for _____ years.
(circle one)

I am with _____ agency.

I wish to join the effort:

- Single Family Membership** (a single foster or adoptive parent), \$25
- Family Membership** (married foster or adoptive parents), \$35
- Supporting Membership** (individuals wishing to support our efforts), \$75
- Organization Membership** (organizations wishing to support our efforts), \$150
- Friends of NFAPA**, \$5 billed Monthly

My donation will be acknowledged through Families First newsletters.

- Gold Donation, \$1,000
- Silver Donation, \$750
- Platinum Donation, \$500
- Bronze Donation, \$250
- Other, \$ _____